

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 PC-01 ISO-00 CU-02 AID-05 SCCT-01 SY-05

IO-13 DHA-02 ORM-02 ACDA-07 TRSE-00 OMB-01 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 EB-07 NEA-10 /123 W

----- 003077

R 231331Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO /SECSTATE WASHDC 0335

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY SANA

USCINCEUR

COMIDEASTFOR

CINCUSNAVEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 8773

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, ET

SUBJECT: FURTHER THOUGHTS ON THE EXECUTIONS

REF: A. ADDIS ABABA 8286 (DTG 121518Z JUL 76)(NOTAL)

B. ADDIS ABABA 8301 (DTG 130951Z JUL 76)

C. ADDIS ABABA 8331 (DTG 131423Z JUL 76)

D. ASMARA 538 (DTG 131340Z JUL 76)(NOTAL)

E. ADDIS ABABA 8610 (DTG 200716Z JUL 76)(NOTAL)

SUMMARY: FACTORS BEHIND EXECUTION OF 19 PEOPLE INCLUDING

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COMMANDER OF ERITREAN FORCES, BG GETACHEW, AND DIRG MAJOR

SISAY ARE NOT MUCH CLEARER THAN PREVIOUSLY. MOST OF OUR SOURCES DESCRIBE THE EVENTS IN TERMS OF ONE OR THE OTHER OF THE TWO SCENARIOS REPORTED REF A, COMBINED WITH EFFORTS BY MAJOR MENGISTU TO CONSOLIDATE HIS HOLD ON POWER. FURTHER INFORMATION INDICATES THAT 7 OF THE 19 EXECUTED FOR "PLOT-TING AGAINST THE REVOLUTION" WERE POSSIBLY MEMBERS OR SYMPATHIZERS OF THE CLANDESTINE ANTI-DIRG ETHIOPIAN PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY PARTY (EPRP). END SUMMARY.

1. CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING EXECUTIONS ARE STILL UNCLEAR (AND MAY WELL REMAIN SO) INCLUDING REASONS WHY DIRG CHOSE EXECUTION ROUTE RATHER THAN LESS DRASTIC MEASURES. MOVE OCCURRED AGAINST BACKDROP OF FRUSTRATION OVER INTERNAL POLICY FAILURES INCLUDING DISASTROUS OUTCOME OF "OPERATION RAZA" (PEASANT MARCH), PROBLEMS WITHIN AIR FORCE AND AIRBORNE, REPORTED DEMANDS BY SECOND AND THIRD DIVISIONS FOR A RETURN TO CIVILIAN RULE AND PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT OF ERITREA PROBLEM, LACK OF PROGRESS ON ERITREAN NEGOTIATIONS, SEVERE INFLATION AND SHORTAGE OF SOME IMPORTANT FOOD COMMODITIES IN URBAN MARKETS, AND INCREASED DOMESTIC OPPOSITION FROM THE CLANDESTINE MARXIST GROUP, THE ETHIOPIAN PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY PARTY (EPRP). ETHIOPIAN MEDIA, BEYOND INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT REPORTED REF B, HAVE REMAINED SILENT ON EXECUTIONS.

2. MUCH OF DIPLOMATIC CORPS BELIEVES THAT GENERAL GETACHEW WAS KILLED RESISTING ARREST, AND THAT ARREST ORDER WAS GIVEN BECAUSE OF HIS OVERZEALOUSNESS IN PRESENTING ASMARA TROOPS' DEMANDS (REF D) TO DIRG WHICH IN THE PROCESS, ALIENATED FIRST VICE CHAIRMAN MENGISTU. MAJOR SISAY, A POTENTIAL COUNTER-WEIGHT TO MENGISTU, WAS SUPPOSEDLY EXECUTED BECAUSE HE NOT ONLY SUPPORTED GETACHEW IN THIS CONFRONTATION WITH MENGISTU, BUT HAD CONSISTENTLY OPPOSED MANY OF MENGISTU'S OTHER PROGRAMS AND OTHERWISE FAILED TO GIVE THE UNQUESTIONING OBEDIENCE TO ORDERS THAT MENGISTU EXPECTED. MAJOR KIROS IS THOUGHT TO HAVE SUPPORTED MAJOR SISAY. THIS THEORY SUGGESTS THAT DIRG DECISION TO EXECUTE GETACHEW MAY HAVE ONE ABOUT SUDDENLY AND THAT HIS DEATH PROVIDED HANDY OPPORTUNITY TO DEAL WITH SEVERAL PROBLEMS AT SAME TIME: ELIMINATE SISAY AS POTENTIAL CHALLENGER TO MENGISTU'S AUTHORITY, WARN

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"ECONOMIC SABOTEURS", AND PERHAPS WARN EPRP AS WELL. UNFORTUNATELY THEORY FAILS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE ROLE PLAYED BY THE TWO DIRG LIEUTENANTS (BOTH GOJJAMIS) WHO, ACCORDING TO EPMG RELEASE, DISAPPEARED JULY 7, BEFORE GETACHEW HAD EVEN ARRIVED IN ADDIS ABABA, (GETACHEW WAS EXECUTED JULY 10.), THEIR DISAPPEARANCE SUGGESTS THEY BELIEVED SOMETHING WAS UP, WHICH IN TURN FURTHER SUGGESTS SOME KIND OF PRE-PLANNING. THERE IS LITTLE EVIDENCE EITHER WAY. MIDDLE

GROUND INTERPRETATION COULD BE THAT TENSIONS HAD BEEN BUILDING, THAT MENGISTU WAS LOOKING FOR OPPORTUNITY, AND THAT GETACHEW'S PRESENTATION PROVIDED HIM THAT OPPORTUNITY.

3. MORE COMPREHENSIVE EXPLANATION, (REPORTED PARA 3, REF A) IS THAT THERE ARE ESSENTIALLY TWO OPPOSING FACTIONS WITHIN THE DIRG, ONE A PREDOMINANTLY OROMO (GALLA) GROUP LED BY MENGISTU, WHICH COMPRISES MOST OF THE ENLISTED MEMBERS OF THE PMAC. OPPOSING THEM IS A MORE MODERATE, PREDOMINANTLY AMHARA/TIGRE GROUP WHICH HAS NO ACKNOWLEDGED LEADER; SOME BELIEVE MAJOR SISAY WAS A POTENTIAL LEADER OF THIS GROUP. ALTHOUGH IDEOLOGY IS THE CONTROLLING DETERMINANT OF POLITICAL "ACCEPTABILITY" IN THE GOVERNMENT, IDEOLOGY IS STRONGLY INFLUENCED BY AN INDIVIDUAL'S ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND. ACCORDING TO THIS THEORY, THE PREDOMINANTLY CHRISTIAN/AMHARA/TIGRE, BECAUSE OF THEIR FORMER DOMINANCE IN THE SOCIETY, WOULD BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY RADICAL CHANGE AND THEREFORE ARE LIKELY TO BE POLITICAL MODERATES. THUS, FOR EXAMPLE, THEY PROBABLY OPPOSED THE DISESTABLISHMENT OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH AS THE STATE RELIGION. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE MAJORITY GROUP, THE MUSLIM OROMOS (GALLAS), LONG RELEGATED TO AN INFERIOR ROLE IN ETHIOPIAN SOCIETY, WOULD LIKELY FAVOR A COMPLETE RE-ORDERING OF THE SOCIETY AND THUS BE "POLITICAL RADICALS". IN MUCH THE SAME FASHION AS THE OLD AMHARA/TIGRE ELITE "COOPTED" MANY GALLAS (MOSTLY ON THE BASIS OF LANGUAGE, RELIGION, AND LOYALTY TO THE EMPEROR) THE NEW GALLA POWER STRUCTURE WHICH INCLUDES MAJOR MENGISTU, A MAJORITY OF THE DIRG, LEADING "POLITBURO" MEMBERS AND SOME OF THE MINISTERS WHOM THEY HAVE INSTALLED, HAS COOPTED MANY AMHARAS AND TIGRESSON THE BASIS OF IDEOLOGY AND ACCEPTANCE OF MENGISTU AND HIS PROGRAMS. THIS IS WHAT ACCOUNTS FOR THE AMHARAS AND TIGRES IN THE "POLITBURO" AND THE CONTINUED (SO FAR) PRESENCE OF SECOND

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VICE CHAIRMAN LT. COL. ATNAFU AND OTHER NORTHERNERS IN THE DIRG. THUS, ACCORDING TO THIS THEORY, GETACHEW, SISAY ET AL WERE THE "LOSERS" IN A POWER STRUGGLE WHICH IS BASICALLY IDEOLOGICAL WITH STRONG ETHNIC/RELIGIOUS OVERTONES. WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT THIS STRUGGLE IS CONTINUING AND WILL LIKELY GO ON UNTIL A STRONG MAN, (CURRENT FRONT-RUNNER MENGISTU) EMERGES. LASTLY WE ARE TOLD THAT 14 OF THE 19 EXECUTED WERE FROM GOJJAM PROVINCE.

4. THIS THEORY IS WIDELY BELIEVED BY MANY ETHIOPIANS. EMBASSY, HOWEVER, WHILE ACCEPTING THAT TRIBAL/RELIGIOUS FORCES FORM SIGNIFICANT BACKDROP AND ARE PROBABLY CONTRIBUTING FACTOR TO MANY EVENTS IN ETHIOPIA, IS NOT READY TO SUBSCRIBE TO IDEA THAT THESE FORCES WERE NECESSARILY DOMINANT MOTIVATING REASON FOR EXECUTIONS. WHATEVER ELSE HE MAY BE, MEN-

GISTU STILL GIVES AN IMPRESSION OF BEING NATIONALIST FIRST. THIS IS NOT TO SAY HE IS NOT INFLUENCED BY TRIBAL/ RELIGIOUS FACTORS (BECAUSE OF HIS SOUTHERN POWER BASE) ESPECIALLY WHERE THEY INTERACT WITH IDEOLOGICAL FACTORS, BUT WE LACK ANY REAL EVIDENCE OF THEIR PREDOMINANCE IN HIS THROUGH PROCESS. WE SHALL NEVERTHELESS CONTINUE TO KEEP THIS THEORY IN MIND IN COMING MONTHS.

5. INTERESTINGLY, BOTH SISAY AND KIROS (AMONG OTHERS) WERE FINGERED BY THE UNDERGROUND PAMPHLET "SHIMUT" SIX MONTHS AGO. SINCE THIS FLYER IS ALMOST CERTAINLY A "BLACK PRO-PAGANDA" EFFORT BY THE "POLITBURO" IDEOLOGUES, SISAY AND KIROS MAY HAVE BEEN VIEWED AS IDEOLOGICALLY UNACCEPTABLE FOR SOME TIMES.

6. SEVERAL SOURCES HAVE TOLD US THAT THE SEVEN WHO WERE EXECUTED FOR "PLOTING AGAINST THE REVOLUTION" (REF B) WERE MEMBERS OF THE CLANDESTINE, ANTI-DIRG ETHIOPIAN'S PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY PARTY. ALL OF THEM APPEARED TO BE NORTHERNERS, WHICH IS CONSISTENT WITH WHAT WE ARE TOLD IS THE ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF THAT MARXIST GROUP. TWO OF THE SEVEN, THE ASNAKE BROTHERS, WERE EDUCATED IN VETERINARY MEDICINE, ONE IN THE US, THE OTHER IN EASTERN EUROPE.

7. SITUATION IS THUS STILL CONFUSED AND WILL REQUIRE SOME TIME BEFORE WE CAN SEE EFFECTS OF THESE EVENTS WITH MORE CONFIDENTIAL

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CLARITY. ON THE SURFACE, THE EXECUTIONS SEEM TO HAVE CAUSED HARDLY A RIPPLE IN EVERYDAY LIFE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MILITARY PERSONNEL, EXECUTIONS, NATIONAL UNIFICATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 JUL 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976ADDIS08773
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760285-0816
From: ADDIS ABABA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760730/aaaaazuq.tel
Line Count: 204
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 ADDIS ABABA 8286
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 FEB 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <19 FEB 2004 by morefirh>; APPROVED <24 AUG 2004 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FURTHER THOUGHTS ON THE EXECUTIONS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, ET, (SISAY), (B G GETACHEW)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006